

VZCZCXRO7921
PP RUEHDBU RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHROV RUEHSR
DE RUEHBM #0314/01 0751643
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 161643Z MAR 07
FM AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6273
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
RUEHCH/AMEMBASSY CHISINAU 1250

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 BUCHAREST 000314

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/NCE FOR (JENSEN) AND EUR/UMB (FURST)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/15/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PBTS](#) [RO](#) [MD](#)

SUBJECT: COMPARING NOTES ON MOLDOVA: AMB. KIRBY VISITS
BUCHAREST

Classified By: Polcouns Theodore Tanoue for Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

¶1. (C) Summary: Romanian frustrations in dealing with Moldova were a leitmotif during Ambassador Kirby's visit to Bucharest March 7-8, which included calls on senior Basescu advisors, the PM's Chief of Staff, the MFA State Secretary, and exchanges with MFA Moldova experts and representatives of local think-tanks and NGOs. Kirby also gave a well-received briefing for local NATO and EU Ambassadors. Kirby counseled Romanian forbearance and patience towards prickly Moldovan behavior. He also advocated that Bucharest make an effort to counter the perception that a new "Iron Curtain" had descended across the Prut River because of new visa requirements for Moldovan citizens. Romanian officials described the quandary they face with the prospect of many hundreds of thousands of Moldovan citizens seeking Romanian citizenship, and their effort to calibrate their approach to responding to the Moldovan demand in ways that are consonant with broader EU interests. USG efforts in Moldova, including MCA projects focused on reform and fighting corruption, were received positively by Kirby's Romanian hosts, who highlighted their own emphasis on engaging Moldovan civil society, the Moldovan business community along with the next generation of Moldovan politicians. Ambassador Kirby said that he was also struck by the fact that informally, many of his Romanian interlocutors seemed to feel that Moldova would eventually reunite with Romania, and tended to be sceptical of the notion of a separate Moldovan "identity." We hope his visit will help reinforce the more careful and measured approach to Moldova that had already begun to take shape in Bucharest. End Summary.

Cotroceni: Frustration and the Long View

¶2. (C) Basescu's chief political advisor at the Romanian Presidency, Teodor Baconschi -- who seemed somewhat distracted by the fact that President Basescu was staging a press conference just outside the meeting room -- said he would like to see Moldova rejoin Romania someday but admitted it was not a realistic option. In light of Voronin's increasingly hostile stance, Romania's focus thus was on supporting "the people of Moldova" through concrete actions now, rather than waiting for another mood swing in Chisinau. Baconschi observed that Moldovan citizens desired EU membership, adding that Moldovans see the EU as an escape from poverty and a "source of prosperity for their dreams." This sentiment was echoed by Ambassador Kirby who added the Moldovan Parliament would vote overwhelmingly in favor of EU entry today if it could. Baconschi remarked that the Moldovans are too poor to be Euro-skeptics, and that even President Voronin tacitly acknowledged this with his ironic comment that "Moldova may be the first place where the people join the EU before their country does."

13. (C) Baconschi stressed that the USG needed to press for a resolution of the Transnistria problem, since Romania had little leverage bilaterally. While expressing the broad aspiration of President Basescu for a reunion of Moldova with Romania someday within the European Union, Baconschi acknowledged that the average Romanian citizen had little interest in reunification. Ambassador Kirby responded that Russia and Ukraine shared a common interest in seeing that borders didn't change. Baconschi concluded that President Basescu's hopes to work more closely with President Voronin had been dashed, and that the Romanians had concluded that it was better to focus on the citizens (especially the youth) of Moldova as a way to prepare for a more amicable future in the post-Voronin era.

14. (C) Presidential chief Foreign Policy Advisor Anca Ilinoiu, who accompanied Basescu to Chisinau in January, and who follows Moldovan issues closely, likewise expressed frustration and disappointment with the state of play in the Romanian-Moldovan bilateral relationship. She highlighted the fact that the Romanian MFA had been totally unprepared for the influx of Moldovan requests for Romanian citizenship, much less the sharply increased volume of visa requests Romanian consuls have seen both in Chisinau and in other capitals in Europe where Moldovans live and work. Ilinoiu cited a figure of 530,000 citizenship requests filed with the Romanian government, requests which are filed on a family rather than individual basis. (An Austrian diplomat at Kirby's NATO/EU briefing subsequently claimed he had been given a figure of "only" 300,000, but either way the numbers are very substantial.) Ilinoiu said Moldovan "duplicity" in its diplomatic dealings was reflective of the current government's true character. She confirmed that the Romanian approach had shifted to a less active, more

BUCHAREST 00000314 002 OF 004

pessimistic one last fall, when Voronin's negative statements about the relationship made it clear to the GOR that President Basescu's efforts to build a better relationship with Voronin had failed. Ilinoiu echoed Baconschi in stating that Romania was looking beyond the current political configuration towards the future leaders, and that Romania was promoting projects to strengthen Moldovan civil society, the rule of law, and scholarships and educational opportunities. She said that the Romanian approach would be measured and restrained; Bucharest would not respond in kind to the aggressive rhetoric emanating from Chisinau.

MFA: Treaty Headaches

15. (C) MFA interlocutors, including Director-General for Wider Europe Razvan Rusu, provided a detailed chronology of the state of play on bilateral negotiations on a Basic Treaty and a Border Regime Treaty. They noted that the border treaty text was substantially agreed except for matters involving nomenclature, format, and language. The Moldovans had insisted on reference to the 1947 Paris Treaty, and on attaching all previous treaties as appendices to the Border Treaty, which our interlocutors insisted would result in a treaty containing over a cubic meter of supplemental annexes. Moldova also insisted on language underscoring that "both texts were equally authentic", implying that the treaty was drafted in two different languages -- "Moldovan" and Romanian.

16. (C) On the Basic Treaty, our MFA contacts said that their intention was to offer a very "European" document focused on creating a European Partnership Agreement in order to share Romania's experience in meeting EU membership standards. This document would be similar to partnership agreements concluded with Georgia, Croatia, and Macedonia. One departure was that the Romanians could offer to the Moldovans documents already translated into Romanian. They added that Romania could also offer its expertise in such areas as

energy, wine exports, justice and home affairs. In response, the Moldovans had insisted on a 1950s style Basic Treaty, focusing on mutual legitimization and endorsement of a new post-Cold War relationship.

¶7. (C) In response to the Romanian MFA complaint of "What should we do?," Ambassador Kirby cited the biblical story of Job, and counseled patiently taking the high road. He noted that domestic political factors helped explain Moldovan behavior: the Communist Party was seized by the upcoming local elections in May. Much of the rhetoric directed against Romania was actually aimed at mobilizing older voters in the Party's base. He added that younger, reform oriented voters were not a significant part of the equation, given that many have already voted with their feet and left the country.

Lunch with Acting FM: Kirby Counsels Patience

¶8. (C) MFA State Secretary (and de facto acting FM) Adrian Vierita prefaced his remarks by thanking Ambassador Kirby for the visit. He took note of the GOR's goals of obtaining closer cooperation in the larger Black Sea region (through such vehicles as the Black Sea Trust Fund, the Marshall Fund, and the Black Sea Forum) and dealing with "unfinished business" in the region stemming from the Soviet period. Moldova was part of this agenda, as Romanian diplomacy was directed towards connecting Moldova to positive trends in the region and to the EU. Vierita added that the Romanian focus was increasingly turning towards fostering the development of civil society in Moldova, and creating a new generation of leaders not linked to Soviet-period "old thinking". He also compared the rapid development of Romanian-Ukrainian relations with the slow pace of improvement in Romanian - Moldovan ties. For example, Basescu and Yushchenko had created a framework to resolve a number of tough issues, including a cross-border roundtable. They had focused on deliverables, positive on-the-ground results, and confidence-building measures underpinned by an implicit agreement not to touch on "sensitive" problems.

¶9. (C) Ambassador Kirby reiterated his themes regarding the domestic and external context for Moldovan behavior. Last year had been a miserable one, including, inter alia, gas and electricity shortages; the failure of the 5 + 2 talks; the Russian ban on Moldovan wine imports; the suspension of rail connections between Chisinau and Moscow; the loss by the communists in the Gagauz elections; and other factors. The communists also feared losing the upcoming May elections. This meant the leadership was currently fixated on short-term

BUCHAREST 00000314 003 OF 004

matters. Finally, Voronin wanted a solution to Transnistria as his legacy and needed Russian cooperation. Ambassador Kirby also noted that the January 2007 imposition of new EU travel restrictions was a major shock to Moldova, creating the perception that a new "Iron Curtain" had descended across the Prut River. He noted, too, the potential impact of the hundreds of thousands of Moldovans applying for Romanian nationality and departing the country. Vierita responded that Romanian citizenship law was not specifically aimed at Moldovans and was in fact one of the toughest laws in the EU. Finally, Ambassador Kirby underscored the need for more effective public diplomacy on the Romanian side to make their position better known in Moldova.

¶10. (C) Ambassador Kirby also suggested better leveraging the argument of meeting "EU norms" in order to get to an agreement with Chisinau on the border treaty. Vierita responded that it was a good idea and Romania would follow up on the suggestion. He added that Romania wanted a resumption of negotiations under the 5 + 2 format. Asked about how Romania should behave, Ambassador repeated his admonition for patience. It was difficult not to respond to provocative language from Chisinau, but restraint was the best response.

¶11. (C) Ambassador Kirby stressed similar themes at an afternoon session with PM's Chief of Staff, Mihnea Constantinescu and State Secretary for Moldova Dan Dumitru. He said that the "delete" key was often his most-used word processing function when composing responses to Moldovan leaders. Constantinescu agreed, remarking that Romania had no intention of conducting cross-border relations through angry press statements. The goal was to persuade the Moldovan side through diplomatic means that they should act in ways consonant with the best interests of Moldovan citizens. He added that Barroso's restrained but firm response to Moldovan demands regarding the EU visa regime was a "model" for a future EU "code of conduct" in handling Moldova. The Romanian message to Chisinau was that it was subsuming its Moldova policy under the overall EU umbrella. He concluded that "we are part of the EU now" and Romania needed to abandon the line that "Moldova is something special to us."

¶12. (C) Ambassador Kirby said that he met regularly with EU Ambassadors and with World Bank and IMF representatives in Chisinau. This helped create a common effort on the ground in Chisinau to encourage Moldova to continue political and economic reforms as well as to continue to improve the rule of law. He said that he had counseled Moldovan leaders not to take the current "never" from the EU to mean "never forever" but rather as "never for now." He added that the Moldovan political class understands what is required of them, but are not fully willing to pay the price. Constantinescu agreed, noting that the "Leninist" background of Moldova's current leaders coupled with their vested interests would make a quick evolution on the Romanian model unlikely. He said, however, that he was optimistic that a "critical mass" for reform would be achieved in a decade.

¶13. (C) Ambassador Kirby also noted USG efforts on other fronts, including Millennium Challenge Corporation projects on corruption, judicial reform, and health sector reform, backed with significant (USD 200-300 million) funding. Constantinescu welcomed the U.S. approach, noting the past success of economic and social incentives in other areas of the Balkans. He said he was pleased to hear that of U.S. efforts to create a "catalyst" for reforms, an effort that was consonant with Romania's new emphasis on grassroots efforts. In closing, Constantinescu expressed the hope that Kirby would encourage Moldovan authorities to try to look at Bucharest as a source of practical solutions for bringing Moldova closer to the EU. He insisted that Romania had no "hidden interests" and its goal was to benefit the citizens of Moldova and to create a greater sense of "normality" and "good neighborly" relations in the region.

¶14. (C) Comment: Romanians welcomed the opportunity to meet with Ambassador Kirby and to compare notes on Moldova. Kirby's briefing of EU and NATO member mission heads was also well-received. His recommendation that Bucharest play it cool despite the heated rhetoric emanating from Chisinau was treated seriously by our interlocutors. Whether or not the current approach in Bucharest of turning the other cheek is sustainable remains to be seen, but Romanian officials by and large seem to recognize that their ability to warm up the bilateral relationship will be quite limited for the rest of

BUCHAREST 00000314 004 OF 004

Voronin's tenure. Whatever "big brother" overhang there is in Romanian policy towards Moldova, there are signs Bucharest will proceed cautiously in the months ahead, being careful to consult Brussels as it steers a lower-key bilateral course. One remaining wild card: the fact that hundreds of thousands of Moldovans are seeking Romanian citizenship, their ticket, they believe, to a brighter future. End Comment.

¶15. (U) Embassy Chisinau cleared a draft version of this

message.
TAUBMAN